

Harold Cross-General Sec.

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hear in the talks - actually I was tempted to go off on a riff on something

you said there to see where it went, but instead in a very pedestrian way <sup>sharply as I might have</sup> I'm going to focus instead

on a very immediate aspect of our society, which I don't think I can convey <sup>here</sup> I shied

away from it - it is so far in my lectures <sup>here</sup> - and first, the point that I was

interested in not only knowing how to understand Curtis LeMay psychologically

which I am interested <sup>in, but</sup> how do we understand the society that made Curtis LeMay

and his staff and honored him every step of the way for what he was and what he did.

Not because they misunderstood him, but because they understood him perfectly.

What was this society that used him - here was a man that said "use me" and we used him - and not only once, but over a long career, and what was this society? <sup>The next point,</sup> I think

I've been inhibited - it's hard for me to come out and say. It is not a random

match between LeMay and this society. It was America that had use for LeMay. And

I don't say that because I believe, because I don't believe that the US is

<sup>particularly or</sup> uniquely murderous or evil or sinful in general <sup>and war,</sup> but I think I do know, I don't

know all the information, but I do know something about this society which is not part of our collective self-image, but is in my mind unquestionably true and can

easily be demonstrated. We are not entirely different from our mother <sup>one other society, our</sup> society, England it so happens, for reasons that I couldn't explain, so what I am saying applies to England it so happens, and there are LeMays in England, that these two

societies - England and America - have a quite peculiar and almost unique predilection

for indiscriminate massacre from the air, for high level instrument bombing <sup>as</sup> - a way of conducting

war. It is obvious that we are not particularly warlike than other countries, but our way of conducting war <sup>has</sup> is very definite peculiarities and has been trending

in that direction since just after WWI <sup>It was</sup> and fully realized in WW II and now has

an institutional basis which was almost unique in the world until, under the pressure

of humiliations we afflicted on Russia (which did not have an institutional strategic

air command as late as 1961) they acquired one and now they have an institutional basis <sup>for this</sup>

but not the practice, behind. Russian like every other country except England,

lacks a history that tells it that it has won a war by bombing people - only two

countries <sup>in the world</sup> that of themselves, and I say "believe it" because believe it especially in the case of England with their bombing of

German ships has a great deal of self-delusion <sup>an</sup> of almost cult-like faith. We have

more basis for that in connection with Japan etc. (I'm not talking the atomic but about firebombing).  
bomb, but we definitely do believe that we won a major war with bombing as the theory told us was possible. So we had the institution that required this faith for its own sense of independence and were fighting under services of the air force. The institution got its way in WW II, believed that it had been predominantly successful, and on that basis, and with a new weapon, the atom bomb, won a lion's share of the defense budget - a share which no other air force in any other country got. This country is a bombing country. That has a lot of implications.

I'm going to mention just one. In some ways, it means that we have fears that are somewhat unrealistic, though very natural, because they are projections of our own predilections on other countries that have bombers. Our assumption that Russia would acquire a strategic bombing force after the war was a projection that they were like us. Actually

nobody is like us, and Russia didn't acquire a strategic bombing force and we

weren't in the danger we assumed we were, They went twenty years without a

strategic bombing force. We thought all that time, as some of you my age will

remember, These turned out to be total illusions, but they had a core of sincerity, based on the assumption that Russia surely would not omit the ability to bomb us, (not realizing to this day there is no other country in this world, except England that thinks of bombing civilians as the natural way to fight a war.) We're the country that believes that. So, we are peculiarly dangerous to other people when we defend them with our armed forces, because we defend them with bombers. And

we're peculiarly dangerous to our enemy. Since Brezhnev in '64, we are very dangerous to ourselves because they now have the capability to retaliate, which was not true after 1945?

true after 1942 with Truman. Yet, we go on, although we're perfectly aware that this is now peculiarly dangerous. Let me suggest something of a psychology to this -

I said first there is a societal experience which is, in the whole, not in the awareness of most people. How many people could honestly say that they have an image of Americans as warriors, that emphasize bombing?

Yes

✓ John (cont'd)

One way

We do have an image in Vietnam is helicopters.

That's new.

Now the Russians are doing that in Afghanistan.

I've had that image of England and I assumed that it had something to do with being an island, and not having the... and that that had something with their having their island and perhaps the Americans too of having to do with America's emphasis too. we don't have the experience of people being able to cross our boundaries.

D.E. — I'm sure there is a psychological aspect of the island <sup>nation</sup> and the distancing of the enemy and there are various aspects. One sufficient aspect when the bombing plane came in, when the

Air plane came in to the inventories at the end of World War II, in only two

countries did it come into a country where the armed forces were

countries that was not predominantly armies. Those were the two island powers

of America and <sup>ENG</sup> Island, where the Navy was <sup>the</sup> predominant power. In all the Continental countries, the liberal and the nonliberal ones, France, Germany, Russia, the armies managed to keep the air plane to its purposes: reconnaissance, artillery spotting, and close air support of army, and that was true of Hitler's Germany. in strategic bombing,

Despite Gehring's admiration for the English. He wasn't allowed to build long-range

bombers. The two countries where the air force - where the army was rudimentary peace time, because of being island powers, were able to burst loose and realize the real potential air power. I'll tell you

one thing about LeMay. There were different attitudes as to what air power

could actually do and one of thing was based on the illusion, which I'm sure have

psychological roots, that exist to this day; most civilians who are enthralled with

air, they have an illusion in their minds that it is not only very powerful but

very precise. This is almost a total illusion. The notion of surgical bombing

has persisted throughout the history of the air bombers. The bomber has never

been surgical at all. It's an extremely imprecise instrument, so what LeMay

discovered <sup>was</sup> LeMay faced up, (This is realism now, combined with a motivational

aspect.) LeMay faced up to the genuine limitations of the bomber and realized that

it was good for only one thing; destroying cities, not good for destroying factories because it couldn't hit factories. There was an immense resistance to perceiving

that <sup>institutionally</sup> year after year they kept trying to hit factories and having not much effect.

like  
Harris

LeMay finally realized that what they were really good at was killing people,  
then he had this motivational aspect that  
and he was willing to do that.<sup>1</sup> Allowed him to use it that way. We can do that,  
<sup>If you optimize for it,</sup>  
if you do it right<sup>2</sup>, the bomber can do that. So he turned the bomber - it meant  
using the bomber in a new way. It was a way the bomber could be used. The bomber  
was an instrument of destroying cities.